

Vol. 12 No. 4

*via pacis*



aug-oct

# Around the House

It's really amazing the way things change so completely from time to time around the house and the community. Jim thinks that our own attitudes and approaches to things have a lot to do with it, and he's probably right. But be that as it may, once a change for the better starts to happen it certainly blossoms and affects all of us, community and guests, and that's what has been happening over the last few months around here.



The first sign of new life was when we had a whole houseful of wonderful women and kids who really made this their home for a big part of the summer, taking on the cleaning, cooking, and even cleaning and tearing out ceilings at the new house. It was quite a sight to see the string of filthy sootcovered women and kids coming back to the house after a few hours over there looking like miners straggling home. So we want to thank Rose, Rachel, Troy, Jeremiah, Chris and Fernando, the cleanup crew!

Then when we had gotten really despondent about not being able to get anything done on the new house, ACE Heating and Electric came through and offered to take care of the wiring, which had been the major hold up. Monty Mickle from ACE has put in a lot of time (a lot of it in outrageous temperatures and after a full day on the job) on wiring the house and it is (incredibly) almost done. We really appreciate all the help.

More great news about the house is that Marvin Windows has donated thermopane windows for the entire house. We really want to thank Marvin Windows for this very generous donation, as well as the A.A. Schneiderhahn Co., which was the intermediary, and Bob Molman, Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus, who worked the whole thing out and made sure that it happened.

We've had a lot of help on the house from some of the guests who are staying at Lazarus House, especially Vincent and Daniel, two carpenters who have been drywalling the entire first floor as well as making some repairs to the porch. Jim has really been glad to have someone working over there with him on a regular basis and it really makes a difference in anything getting done any time soon. We also want to thank Manuel, Gregorio, Roberto, Paul, Elton and John for putting in time on fixing up the house.

The next step in rehabbing the house is to get the plumbing in, and we will be starting on that as soon as we are able to raise the money for it.

Judith Reeh, who spent a year in the community and has been back in her native Germany for the past year, came out for a couple of weeks for a visit. She jumped into the work as if she had never left, and the new coat of paint on the first floor of Lazarus is her work. It was really good that she came when Leagals and J.R. were still new here since she spent time with them and everyone who has been around a Catholic Worker for any amount of time has different insights and perspectives to share, so that was really good. It was wonderful to see Judith, but now we miss her all over again!

Having some new community members has loosened things up a lot and brought a lot of new energy. Leagals Dunbar, who started off working fulltime next door at the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, is still doing occasional volunteer work over there but is putting in most of his time at the Worker. He's been working on the library, cleaning and taking the house, and spends most of his spare time hanging out at Lazarus with whoever is around -- the sign of a born Catholic Worker. Maybe one of these days he'll take the leap and decide to officially join the community instead of this de facto stuff!

J.R. just got back from a visit home to Indiana for a week. He's still working days at IPN and at the house in the evenings and on weekends. Katie has a big crush on J.R. so he has to spend a lot of time carrying her around if she spots him.

Patti made it back from her trip to India and is still trying to digest what it means, so the article she promised for this issue isn't here. If you want to hear about it you'll have to come to the roundtable she'll be doing after Mass on the first Friday in October. Meanwhile you might be able to get a preview by stopping by the house some day on her shift.



Jim will be going off the schedule probably this week for about six months. He's going to be staying here and working on the new house during part of the time, but will also be using his time away to visit friends and family and do some things he's been wanting to do for a long time but hasn't felt able to with his responsibilities around here.

Luke is in kindergarten at Moulton and now that he's figured out how to get home if there's a fire drill he's liking it just fine. He and Omar had a good time all summer at Peppermint College, the Bible school at Friendship Baptist Center, but once that ended he was bored to death and like Fernando and Omar was really happy to have something to do when school started up again. Fernando and Omar are back at McKinley and Omar is rubbing it in that he doesn't have any homework and Fernando does, but those happy days are numbered!



Norman finally took his long-threatened vacation and took a bus trip to the East Coast. Since he just came back yesterday he had to stay up all night to write his article so don't miss it!

Katie turned 2 at the end of August and Nora turns 3 today, so the toddler crowd is growing up. They aren't getting along so well these days and usually require a referee if they are in the same room, but it's a rough job since the referee is usually the one who gets bit. Filomena seems to have the best luck, and manages to bring them both home dressed up like young ladies and acting like it too.

I saved myself (Wendy) for last because I don't know what I'm doing. I've been trying to work something out so I can go out to the East Coast during the Affordable Housing campaign and for my friend Lin Romano's fifth Epiphany Plowshares trial, but it doesn't really look like that's going to work out, so I'll probably be sticking around and work on the issue on the home front. Meanwhile I'm learning how to drive, which I have been terrified of my whole life, so I'm feeling pretty good about that and also about learning some things working with Jim on the new house. It doesn't take an expert to figure out what I have been working on over there but we're going to cover it all up anyway, so ...

A last bit of good news is that Ted Pederson, a friend of Kari Fisher's who spent a year at the Houston CW, Casa Juan Diego, will be joining the community at the beginning of October. He's in Texas now wrapping up his affairs but was in Des Moines a couple of weeks ago and says he will be here for sure.

That's about it for us -- we hope as always that folks will stop by and spend some time at the house. Some people have been doing it recently and it's been a lot of fun. Hope to see you!



## MASS CHANGE

Beginning with October, we are going to be holding Mass at the Worker on the first Friday of every month at 7:30, followed by a Roundtable discussion. On October 7, Patti will be talking about her trip to India with the Lisle Fellowship/Gandhi Peace Foundation. Please come for worship and stay for the discussion.



## MISSOURI PEACE PLANTING '88

On August 15, at 7:15 AM, 14 people, calling themselves the Missouri Peace Planting '88, entered 10 missile sites in Bates County Missouri. After cutting through locks and scaling fences, some of the peace activists sat silently and prayed. Others planted trees, while others left crosses bearing the names of Central Americans who have died in regional conflicts. All the participants left personal artifacts at the sites, including World War II medals, family photographs, and children's poetry.

Within minutes of the non-violent actions, armed military personnel from nearby Whiteman Air Force base surrounded the ten sites. With weapons drawn and dressed in camouflage fatigues, the soldiers approached the protestors cautiously. Military personnel frisked the protestors nervously, in an apparent reaction to the simultaneous triggering of the 10 missile site "sensors".

Arrested were: Sam Day, Katie Willems, Ariel Glenn, Gail Beyer, Bonnie Urfer, Fr. Jerry Zawada, Duane Bean, Kathy Feit, Sam Guardino, Dorothy Eber, Betty Lewis, Kathy Kelly, Dan McGuire and Mike Stanek. They are expecting to face a federal charge of criminal trespass, carrying a maximum sentence of 6 months and \$500 in fines.



## FRANK'S OUT!

On September 12, after serving 5 months of a six month sentence for trespassing at Offutt Air Force Base, Frank Cordaro was released from Marion Camp in Marion, Illinois. Frank, Kevin McGuire, and Joyce Glenn have all been granted good time on their six month sentences; Rich Koeppen of St. Anthony's shelter in Omaha, who was sentenced on the same charge by a different magistrate will not be granted good time and remains locked up.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING CAMPAIGN

From September 22 through the election the Community for Creative Non-violence will be conducting a campaign to raise the issue of housing to a national focus and to create an environment of concern nationally which will enable politicians to pass a major housing bill, the AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT. This bill, presently before Congress, authorizes \$15 billion annually for a period of 5 years to create 7.5 million units of low cost housing. The campaign is three faceted:

- 1) local efforts to convince senators and representatives to sign on to the bill
- 2) a daily presence at the Capitol in Washington DC in which activists from different cities around the country will commit civil disobedience. People from Des Moines will be at the Capitol on October 27 and we are looking for more people to go.
- 3) a water fast in which some CCNV members and activists from other cities will fast from Sept 22 until the election, as the "conscience of the nation".

For more information about the affordable housing campaign, contact Wendy at 243-0765.

## COMMUNITY

Katie Bobbitt  
Luke Bobbitt  
Wendy Bobbitt  
Leagals Dunbar  
Jim Harrington  
Patti McKee  
Norman Searah  
JR Stockberger

Many thanks to Dean, Doug and Marcia, Kari, Judith, and Kay for all the help with this issue!

## IT'S FALL AGAIN ...

It's fall again.

The other day those ominous yellow envelopes came in the mail. All you property owners out there know what that means. Yes, it is property tax payment time, soon to be followed by winter heating bills. You guessed it -- this is our needs article and one of the things at the top of our list is money. Thanks to our faithful givers we made it through the summer bills and were able to continue our work on rehabbing our new house. But as you know, expenses increase with the cooler weather, so please remember us.

We are also very short of vegetables and fruit of any kind, canned or fresh. The diet has become a little heavy on the starch and protein. Tonight, I am trying to figure out a way to disguise the sauerkraut so people will eat it. So please help us to balance our diet as well as our checkbook.

With fall cleaning around the corner, a quick check through the cleaning supplies shows that we will not get very far. We are low on comet, toilet cleaner, and any kind of all purpose cleaner for floors, walls, cabinets, etc. Our dish soap supply is also dangerously low. So if you can help us out with any of these cleansers, it will be greatly appreciated.

Thanks to all those people who have supplied us with delicious garden produce this summer. And thanks again to those people who donate money and other supplies. We wouldn't make it without you.

## NEEDS

money for taxes and utilities  
fresh or canned fruits and vegetables  
coffee and sugar  
tomato sauce and paste  
dish soap  
cleansers of any kind  
women's hygiene items  
toothbrushes

## NEW HOUSE NEEDS

We're ready to get started with the plumbing work on the new house, and since the house was completely stripped when we got it, we're starting from zero. A plumber friend estimates that the overall costs will be \$4,000-\$4,500, which includes \$1,500 for materials. We hope to get the major part of the work done very soon, and we have found someone willing to work with us on it. But going into winter of course we do not have this kind of money, so we hope you will keep this need in mind too.

# norman's whereabouts



I just got back from a vacation that I can say was interesting. It started after I got done working at the Iowa State Fair. It seems like I promised a lot of people that I would come and visit them. But the problem was which side of the country would I go to, east or west. I wanted to take a swim in an ocean before there's no place to swim because of all the trash, toxic waste and other polluting things that destroy the water and coast lines. I'm afraid we'll be seeing a lot of our drinking water becoming polluted, it is time or should I say that time is getting short and we all should come together to help clean up our mess before our mess cleans us up. I don't just mean water but also our air, our dumps and whatever needs to be cleaned up.

So back to my vacation. At the bus station I found out that if I went to the west coast it would have taken all the money that I had, so I chose the east coast, or home. The trip was long. I saw a lot of interesting people from a lot of cultures and countries. We stopped a lot. As we stopped a lot I became aware of how bad some of the crops were, mostly the corn. I felt sad for the farmers of Iowa while it seems like the farmers in Illinois were OK, their corn seemed better.

When we or should I say when I got to Cleveland, I got into thinking of how good the ocean was going to feel. I haven't seen the ocean in years, so it will be a good treat. Then it was on to New York City. In New York City the most interesting thing happened to me as I was getting off the bus. Instead of meeting the bus driver that drove the bus, I met a panhandler greeting me to New York City at the same time asking me for money. Not to be a bad guy, I gave in and gave him some change. It seems like there were a lot panhandlers and people trying to sell things like watches and jewelry. I sat

down by myself to figure out what to do next. I noticed a poster telling about round trips to Atlantic City and figured it would be a good chance to go swimming in the ocean, so I got a round trip ticket. The trip was good, most of the people on the bus were mostly old and mostly interested in going to the casinos to do some gambling. They said that it was stupid of me to want to go swimming there because of the pollution and I told them that I wanted to take one last swim before there wasn't anyplace to go. A couple of people gave me some money, just in case I should change my mind. Well, we got to Atlantic City and I headed for the ocean. It was strange, there were people cleaning up the beach. They were picking up a lot of things ranging from needles, plastic bags, plastic jars, papers. There was a camera crew taking pictures of the beach and the people cleaning the beach. They wanted to get a few pictures of people swimming. After taking a look at what people were getting out of the water I changed my mind which hurt so I took a walk on the boardwalk then caught a bus back to New York, then home.

When I got to New York, the funniest thing happened when I got off the bus I met a panhandler. It seems like New York City is having problems with panhandlers along with where to put the city's garbage. I took a small trip around the city, I saw a lot of things like people eating out of garbage cans, I saw girls no younger than maybe fourteen or fifteen years old selling themselves, even boys too, children, that's what they were.

I figured that I had had enough so I went home to spend a couple of days with my mother and to save and refreshen a friendship with friends that I haven't seen in years.

It was good even though the time was short. Before I left I told them that I was coming back for a month after I get a truck in June. My mother is coming to Iowa in October which will be good because I haven't seen her in years. I thought that I would do something that I could somehow round out this vacation so on my way back to Des Moines I stopped in New York and lived on the streets for two days. It was interesting and I'm hoping to do it again.

As much as I'm hoping to do it again I'm hoping to get Sheryl's children to come and visit her. I'm hoping to earn as much money as I can before I try to get a loan from the bank.

Besides all this, I'm working on a photo album of people that were staff members of the Des Moines Worker. If anyone knows people that were staff members, tell them that Norman needs a picture of them after the photo album is full.

The reason is, when people come to the house to see what we're like, we don't really have much to show them. Even when we go to Catholic Worker retreats, all we have are our newsletters. I've been picking up pictures and putting them into another photo album. I'm also working on looking for a slide projector. If you know someone who's got one and is thinking about getting rid of it, we could use one.

I could keep on saying what I'm doing, but I feel I've said enough for now. Thank you.

## America's Nuclear Defense -- a Double-Edged Sword

We received the following article as part of a mailing from the Nuclear Navy Plowshares.

**By Tom Carpenter, Staff Attorney  
Government Accountability Project**

The United States is losing the nuclear war. Even though no nuclear weapons have been exchanged, we are hopelessly irradiating our environment in the name of peace. This is because America's nuclear weapons factories are themselves slow-motion bombs raining radioactivity into our air, soil and water.

The poisoning has reached epidemic proportions. Federal officials have admitted that clean-up costs for the radioactive and hazardous waste pollution problems at our nuclear weapons plants could surpass \$100 billion. And the EPA is powerless to regulate the Department of Energy, the agency responsible for overseeing the production of nuclear weapons. At every nuclear weapons

production site in America, groundwater, soil and air pollution is the norm. Billions of gallons of radioactive and chemical pollution have oozed into the water and soil. Many of these environmental quagmires have irreversibly polluted groundwater resources. At the Hanford Reservation in Washington and the Savannah River plant in Aiken, South Carolina, radioactive materials contaminate groundwater 400 times higher than allowable standards. The continuing environmental carnage is irreversible. At the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, expansion plans call for the generation of an astounding 2,400,000 liters of radioactive waste a year.

Even were the government to walk away from these facilities today, the problem of groundwater contamination will be with our grandchildren's children and beyond. The earth's water system is interconnected in a multitude of ways. Water travels via a complex path of cracks, fissures, permeable strata and aquifers. Once an underground source of fresh water is contaminated, there is no turning back - it will take hundreds of thousands or even millions of years to

cleanse itself. Furthermore, radioactive pollution is just one aspect of the problem. Research by groups such as the Radioactive Waste Campaign in New York has revealed, for example, hazardous solvent contamination at the Tennessee Oak Ridge facility at levels at least 1,000 times higher than proposed drinking water standards permit. Unfortunately, aquifer after aquifer is threatened from the bomb factories, putting at risk the water supply of entire cities.

In order to survive, we need to break the spiral of self-destructive behavior by phasing out nuclear weapons production altogether. This conclusion is drawn upon the obvious scientific fact that environmentally we cannot survive peace the way we are now practicing it in perpetual preparation for war. No nuclear weapon need even be exchanged for us to lose the environmental war. Certainly it will soon be too late to hope to clean up the environmental mess, if we don't act now.





# travel

By Dennis McLaughlin

As a longtime friend of the Catholic Worker and Kindred communities, Wendy thought maybe I'd like to write an article for the Via Pacis. I was planning a trip to Guatemala and she said something like, "Oh good, take some pictures for the article you're going to write."

I've been sponsoring a boy named Julio Tecu from Guatemala for about 10 years now and it's been a real good experience.

Let's see, ten years ago I was living in Des Moines on the near north side. My apartment was west of the Bethel Mission and occasionally there would be someone sleeping in the entry. It never really occurred to me then that I might offer them the couch. Since then, sleeping on the floor a couple of nights at the shelter has given me a better perspective on who these people are and why they are sleeping in our entryways.

A couple of years later Frank Cordaro was in jail for doing civil disobedience. Gwen encouraged me to write him a letter in which I mentioned sponsoring a boy named Julio. One of the things he wrote back (which reminds me I haven't written Frank yet) was that I should learn something about Guatemala to better understand the situation in Julio's country. He wrote that "charity without justice is an empty expression".

It happened that a local Amnesty International group was forming and our first Prisoner of Conscience (POC) was Maribel Santos from El Salvador. She was later released and our current POC is Mario Martinez from Guatemala.

A POC is someone who is in prison or tortured simply for what they said, believe or who they are, having neither used nor advocated violence.

According to Amnesty International, Mario Martinez was among twenty-seven union workers who were arrested illegally without warrant June 21st, 1980. Authorities claim the prisoners have simply "disappeared".

It is said that in Guatemala there are no political prisoners, only the "disappeared" and the confirmed dead.

This past summer my well-traveled friends offered me the opportunity to visit Julio. They said they would go with me to Guatemala if I would meet them in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico.

As plans were made, doubt gave way to hope and somehow everything fell into place. I discovered things like you can't get a passport with a driver's license that's been expired for a year and a half. And you can't take the driving test with plates that old either. Did they change the rules or something?

Bus trips are great for meeting people. There was the Biology professor, who knew something about organic farming, returning after too many years to his hometown of Ottawa, Kansas. At night in the rain, to bury his father.

And Allen was going home to Tulsa after spending two and a half years in prison. At seventeen Allen stabbed a man he'd found with his girlfriend and did time behind "the Wall" (Oklahoma State Prison). He said the only thing he was bringing home from prison, besides his prison clothes, was his Bible.

In planning the trip I decided to spend a few days at Little Portion, a Franciscan community founded by John Michael Talbot. The bus driver let me off outside Muskogee, Oklahoma and I began hitchhiking. This is also a great way to meet people, since there wasn't any bus service to Eureka Springs anyway.

The first ride was by far the toughest but before long I was beginning my journal while riding in a Wonder Bread truck, making stops along the way.

Tyson's were pretty big in the area and that seemed to be the main employment opportunity. "Plucking chickens" was what most were happy not to be doing. But the sweet young couple in the old pickup truck with a rifle in the rack were doing just that.

The few days in the Ozark Mountains at Little Portion were well spent. A time to relax, to pray and fast, and prepare for the next part of the Journey. The community at Little Portion (now "The Franciscan Brothers and Sisters of Charity") is a community in transition and not without their share of difficulties. They are taking on a retreat center at MORE Mountain while maintaining other ministries as well.

John Michael speaks about such things as the materialistic West being a "minority of the world's population - consuming a vast majority of the world's goods." As he says, this inequality helps to create global poverty and contributes to war, and "God has called us to repent of this for many years. We have not done so. Since our culture has not chosen to simplify our lifestyle willingly, God will do it for us."

The hike back to Muskogee went quickly. I listened to more talk of tensions between whites and Indians while making my way through Oklahoma towns like Tahlequah.

I made a point of bringing Jesus into the conversation of each ride and people were surprisingly receptive. Maybe it was my newfound zeal, but people were really speaking their hearts. For me zeal burns all too quickly and must be shared as it burns.

The border crossing was quite blunt. At Nuevo Laredo we dove into poverty and I began saying no to children selling things and begging. The gray drizzle just magnified the depressing scene through which we were moving.

The bus system in Mexico is not bad. However, I don't recommend taking a seat behind the driver, as I did, if it's your first time. It was a little like getting into the front seat of a rollercoaster and then wondering if this was such a good idea. It took a while for the drivers to gain my confidence. The first driver was pretty good but the second one seemed to enjoy his work.

The white line doesn't mean quite the same as it does in the US. After a while I caught on that meeting a car while passing a truck was no big thing. These drivers were competent and highly underpaid. That first night on our way to Queretaro I stayed awake, watching in amazement as we wound our way through the mountains.

The next morning I changed busses and arrived in San Miguel. The bus was really packed, bringing people from the countryside into town at six in the morning. San Miguel is an historic "small town" with cobblestone streets and narrow walkways. It's a romantic and festive little town that draws many tourists and those who make it their home. It is an oasis for beggars and merchants, a place for people to get away from Mexico City. There were plenty of churches; seventeen, of which



# notes

most were quite old. It was amazing to see one of them fill to standing room capacity on a Friday morning during Lent.

Mexico City now has the distinction of being the largest city in the world. No doubt it is also one of the most polluted and impoverished. These words seem so statistical, the lives of these people so distant from our own. The Mexico City subway must have been built when they hosted the Olympic games. It was pretty nice and it connects the main bus terminals on the four sides of the city.

It took about 24 hours to get from Mexico City to the Guatemala border. We blew a tire during the night and a man living near the station changed it by hand.

We crossed into Guatemala around noon and by rush hour we would be in Guatemala City.

The military presence became obvious right away. Our bus was stopped seven times between the border and Guatemala City. Several of the women were the main target of the searches. Apparently they were bringing in goods from Mexico to sell and papers were checked repeatedly until finally everyone was asked to get off the bus and all the goods were thrown in a pile with the women and police standing around the pile arguing. We were then told to reboard and the bus left most of them behind.

The hotel in Guatemala City was just down the street from the National Police Headquarters. "Where many a dirty deed are done". The building complex covered more than a block and as I walked around it I thought about Mario Martinez and the thousands of "disappeared". And about Julio.

The next morning the bus left at 6 AM for Rabinal. The young boy beside me had two puppies in a styrofoam cooler and I noticed the morning paper headlines announced George Bush winning Super Tuesday.

We followed the narrow asphalt highway through the mountains, stopping many times to pick up passengers along the highway. The landscape seemed largely unproductive. Rock cliffs and sharp curves. Then after a couple of hours we caught a glimpse of a beautiful green valley. There were many things being cultivated under irrigation with corn at every stage, beans and bananas, coconuts and oranges.

From here we went on to Salama Teca, another productive area in the mountains. And at Salama the asphalt ended. We slowed to about 20 mph and began climbing. The next hour and a half was probably the most thrilling roadwise. The rock road was single lane in some places and steep, with sharp curves where the mountain dropped off immediately and eternally for all practical purposes. There were little "bridges" where the side of the mountain had slid away and stones were carefully constructed to replace the road. Once we had to stop and back up to a wider place so that a minivan, loaded with people, could pass. And sometime before reaching Rabinal something bumped against my shoe. I looked down to see a large bullet. Just like the ones they shoot off on Memorial Day. We used to race to pick up the shells in the cemetery. They made good whistles.



This one make me feel self conscious and I thought about these people who carried machetes and wore sandals made from tires. Their bare heels deeply creviced and their faces lined with memories. And the smiles of the children who never begged, outside of the city, but for attention.

We rounded a curve and could see Rabinal below in a green valley of banana and orange, limes and mangoes.

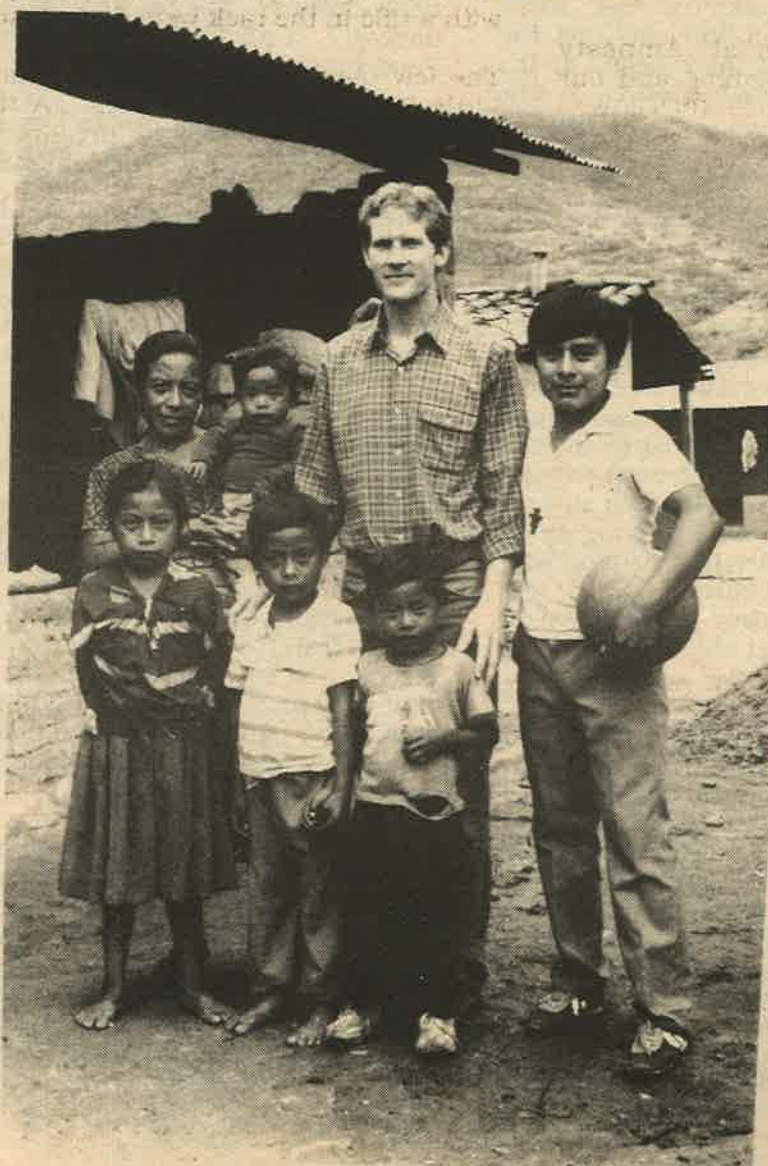
Julio is sixteen and like most teenagers he enjoys having friends. I met some of them, went swimming and played soccer. However, I realized that most of Julio's real friends were not enjoying these things but rather they were working. We met them on Saturday when we crossed through the irrigated vegetable project while taking 200 kids on a field trip. His real friends were hoeing vegetables. They were cutting bamboo cane and working in the cane fields. Or carrying firewood on their backs with a rope or leather thong across their foreheads. They were making adobe block and shoveling sand from the river onto oxcarts. It was the dry season and in another month they would be planting corn and beans and more vegetables. They were also standing on the street corners with rifles in their arms.

By attending school Julio could avoid the army. And without a sponsor many of the poor did not attend school.

I visited his family several times and worked half a day making adobe block from mud and straw. Their home is adobe with tin roof and dirt floor. A well with a rope and bucket. They had one pig on a leash but no chickens.

Electricity wasn't very common in Rabinal. The Project hospital where I stayed had electricity to be used sparingly because of the cost. The sisters put me to work fixing the water pump and cleaning out the rain gutters. Julio worked with me a couple of days at the hospital. And when he didn't show up I knew his father had put him to work. So I helped him make the adobe one morning and we got the afternoon off. We walked to the places where the marimbas were playing. It was part of their Lenten observance, I think. A sort of ceremonial procession to the church and back. Men and women were blessed and the music played and fireworks exploded. Then on Friday nights the people gathered for "the procession". This was a little hard to describe but it involved a dozen men shouldering a lifesize Christ carrying the cross. With this they moved from the church through the streets at a very slow pace. Electricity for the lights and loudspeaker was generated by a gasoline motor mounted onto a hand cart which the men pushed along 50 yards behind. Young boys carried the long electric cord with poles, a light bulb at each pole. And so the streets were filled with people making the stations of the cross. The procession lasted 3 to 4 hours.

(Cont'd on p. 7)



# GETTING BY (affordable housing campaign)

By Wendy Bobbitt

Last year I got very angry at Marty Miller from the Neighborhood Development Office for listing the Free Food Store in his brochure "Good Food Programs" that was passed out at the commodities distribution, the welfare office and various referral agencies. People don't come here very often any more on that recommendation, having discovered that like the other "good food programs" listed, we actually are not one. We still get our 10 or 15 regulars every day coming for bread and hoping for fresh milk or anything else we might have, which isn't too often.

One thing that is very hard to take around here is to see the day to day accommodating to the injustice of poverty that people have to do to get by. Obviously there is no shortage of food or of money either but since both are so unjustly distributed, people have to make the rounds of miserable good food programs and soup kitchens. Because they have to and are accustomed to they don't even show or seemingly feel the rage they are entitled to and that I feel, mixed with shame, whenever I work the food store or read through the rules with new guests.

I hate going over the rules with people, not because they are unnecessary, since any group situation has to have them, but because they underscore the difference between me, in my secure situation, and the people who come here, who are reminded that this is just another short stop. It makes me feel guilty and ashamed, because I know I am no different and have no right to be the one reading the rules instead of the one listening to them, and it makes me angry that people have to go through so many changes just to get by. A month to find a place to live -- it can certainly be done, once you get your check and hustle up the deposits and furniture you need. You can get used clothes for your kids and presents for them at Christmas at the giveaways. It's just part of getting by, which most of them have to do all the time. Move when you can't make the rent. Move when winter comes and you can't get the heat turned on. Eat at the mission at the end of the month. Wash clothes at the Worker.

A family who stayed with us recently had been on the road for weeks in their van, camping out. The mother told me how they stayed a family by reading every night with the kids, and they really were a close-knit and loving family although from what they said they had been living that way for a number of years since they were never finding any jobs anywhere that paid much of anything. They were really happy to get a house here in Des Moines although the gas company wouldn't turn on the gas since it wasn't safe and so they were cooking on an electric skillet. They were just dealing with it till the money situation could get straightened out and they could move or force the landlord to get the gas problem squared away.

Anyone likes to help a family like that, with pride and determination and the energy to keep on going and make a sane life for their kids. Part of it is that they come so close -- as a single parent with two kids I don't have to think too hard to put myself in their shoes and know I couldn't sustain that kind of discipline too long in that kind of insecurity. Jesus tells us to take each day as it comes and it's very humbling to encounter people who are actually doing it when they are so like you that you can't tell the difference.

But everybody who comes in here is getting by like that. A young pregnant woman we know was talking to me today about maybe moving in with a 40 year old man someone knows that they said wouldn't touch her if she didn't want him to because she can't figure out where she can stay for 4 months till she has the baby and can get on ADC. Another woman whose SSI got messed up got a rent voucher but didn't have any money for living expenses so she had to let some guy move in who said he would give her some money (he didn't). Another sold plasma during the interim, and it was duly deducted dollar for dollar as income when the SSI did get straightened out.

I could go on for a long time about the compromises people have to make to get by, not just the time they waste running around or the outrageous solutions they have to accept but the way they have to lie to the helpers all the time to get anything, and automatically brace for a fight or to act servile whenever they walk into an office they have to get something from. But I'm not trying to blame the helpers, because all they are trying to do is to stretch the absurdly inadequate amounts of supplies they have to dole out, so they have to set up the hoops or else the money would run out as soon as they opened the door.

The real issue is justice: the phenomenal gap in income between the poor and the rich, and our willingness to go along with budget priorities that affirm the injustice and give the poor just enough to get by but no chance to escape their poverty or to miss the fact that they are never going to get out of it.

The other day I was reading somewhere that the upper 1/2 percent of the population controls 35% of the wealth and some similar fraction at the top makes more than the bottom 90% combined. That kind of wealth is so far from my comprehension that I can't even imagine it, and what I see every day here seems like normality. You need clothes? Try St. Vincent. A security deposit? Call CROSS Ministries. Good Food Programs.

Mitch Snyder came through here a couple of weeks ago talking with folks about the affordable housing campaign CCNV is working on. He was saying that Reagan did such a great job of tying up the budget that although everyone acknowledges that a housing bill is certain to be passed in some form, no one realistically thinks that Congress will appropriate anything like the \$15 billion per year proposed in the bill currently before Congress, and even its supporters will be happy to get \$3 billion. The bill, which CCNV worked on, would provide 7.5 million units of low-income housing and would finance the costs of building it by increasing taxes on the wealthy. Some CCNV members and others from around the country will be going on a water fast from September 22 until the election to try to convince the politicians that they must do what is right, not what is "realistic", and that justice demands that we address the need of the poor in a serious way.

I read a story when I was a kid about a two dimensional world where the people lived their whole existence in long and wide with no idea that there even was a third dimension. That image has always stuck with me because I know that I live that way, with no idea of the true possibilities of life and the world, and so does everybody else. We are always operating from such a limited view, manipulating our small



situation and never able to step back and look at the whole from God's perspective: is this the way God wants it? So I can't blame the politicians too much for trying to get by with what they think are their options, because I do it all the time too. But this is where there is a desperate need for radical action such as CCNV will be carrying out in taking on this prolonged fast. Someone needs to call this country back to a vision of true justice, something we have never had but now no longer even pay lip service to.



# WHY WE LEFT HOME

By Filomena Bojorquez

On September 14, US policies in Central America were challenged in direct action protests by 17 American peace activists at the US embassies in Guatemala City and Tegucigalpa and at Palmerola AFB in Honduras.

At Palmerola AFB, Brian Terrell (formerly of the Davenport CW and now at the Maloy CW farm), with Elmer Maas, Art Laffin, Bob Simpson, Judith Williams, Kathy Boylan, Mary Jane Helrich, Gail Presby, Jennifer Chase, and Andres Thomas, blockaded the gates. At the embassy in Tegucigalpa Mark Frier, Terri Allen, John Bach, and Pat McCollum blockaded the entrance. At both locations the demonstrators were arrested and held for 2½ days by Honduran military police before being deported to the US.

At the embassy in Guatemala City, Dale Ashera-Davis, Sarah Story, John Schuchardt, and Charlie Leitke poured blood, hung banners and chained themselves to the gate. They were ignored by authorities and remained there for approximately 30 hours. They then entered a 7 day fast over US sins in Central America, remaining the entire time in front of the US embassy. The fast was to end Sept. 22 and they are expected to return on the 23rd to the US.

We left Mexico for economic reasons. In Mexico we had an eight acre farm but we had no money, no machinery and we could not farm it. We lived out in the country but we had no car, and when the children had to go to the doctor it was very far away and we had to go knocking on doors trying to find someone to take us. We had to pay about \$6 to get there, and since we did not have any money we would have to sell something, whatever we had like a pig or something, to pay it. When I went to the hospital to have the baby we had to sell the truck we had at that time because there is no free medical care, if you go to the hospital you have to pay.

Where we lived there were no jobs because we lived in the country, but you could get work in the cities. When we left, a job in the city paid less than \$2 per day, working from 7:30 AM till 5 PM. Now it pays about \$6 per day, but a pair of jeans would cost you a week's wages, and in Mexico you can't buy used clothing, you have to buy new. That's why men go to the United States and send money back, because if they go to a city in Mexico to work there isn't any money to send back.



For us it wasn't as bad as for others because we only had the two boys, but many people have 6 or 7 or as many as 12 kids and they run around with no shoes, hardly any clothes, if they buy them some clothes then they don't eat, and sometimes they just don't eat.

We still have our house in Mexico but it has nothing, it's small and it has no electricity or plumbing and it needs a lot of repairs. Even so, we are keeping it because our son wants to go back to Mexico when he is older. As for us, we are staying here.

## URGENT ACTION ALERT

Amnesty International has put out an Urgent Action Appeal on behalf of a Salvadoran refugee whom the INS is attempting to have deported. Oscar Bartenfeld Alvarez suffered severe head injuries after being beaten by security forces and was hospitalized, after which he fled to the US where he was arrested by the INS. Alvarez applied for political asylum but failed to appear and present his claim at a scheduled hearing. Deportation proceedings were concluded in his absence and an order for deportation was issued. Alvarez has filed a motion to reopen his case and stay deportation. Amnesty is asking that concerned persons write David Ayala, I.N.S. District Counsel, 2102 Teege Ave., Harlingen Texas 78551 urging that the INS withdraw its opposition to this motion.



travel notes  
By Dennis McLaughlin

Sometimes you wonder if you can really make any difference. The other day our Amnesty group received a call from San Francisco. It seems that Maribel (our first POC) was in the custody of the INS. The Amnesty group in San Francisco was looking for the people from Iowa who wrote letters on behalf of Maribel when she was in prison in El Salvador. They needed proof that she was ever in prison and would be in danger if sent back. This was the first we had heard of Maribel since the news of her release from prison in 1985. And needless to say, we were happy to provide the information she needed to remain in the United States.

So maybe it's true, what Monsignor Ligutti has said about little people in little places doing little things.

This Spring I was "processed" by SAC headquarters. A little thing we did in support of those who were sentenced for doing little things.

The people of Rabinal won my heart with their endurance and simplicity. Their lives reflect the saying that "it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness." And as I processed with them I thought about the Women for Guatemala and the Amnesty group. The changes that are hoped for under the new President. The struggle of these people for some kind of justice under the burden of oppression.

And I guess I did it for my friends in Rabinal. There's no mistaking the love they showed me in spite of the things my government has done and continues to do. They don't always understand politics, who does, but they understand oppression and hunger and war and greed. And in the darkness they light the candles of endurance.



*"...the Church  
will not hesitate  
to take up the cause  
of the poor  
and to become the voice  
of those who are not listened to  
when they speak up,  
not to demand charity,  
but to ask for justice."*

— Pope John Paul II

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